

From: Plumbers Choice
Sent: Friday, 17 August 2007 12:58 PM
To: Committee, Environment (REPS)
Subject: Submission on Plumbing Product Quality

Submission No:	17
Date Received:	17/8/07
Secretary:	<i>[Signature]</i>

Inquiry into the regulation of plumbing product quality in Australia

Submission:

From: John Baglin

I am a Victorian based plumber who has worked in Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania over a period of 35 years. It is my opinion that the quality of plumbing products available in Australia has dropped dramatically over the last 10 years and I would think that most "in the field plumbers" would agree with me. I am the chairman of Plumbers Voice, a representative body for plumbers and falling standards is of great concern to our members.

The current system of using Standards Australia is flawed. Standards are generally written by a committee made up of local manufacturers who, at times, take the opportunity to write standards giving themselves competitive advantages. This practice can exclude new competitors and restrict innovation. Another major problem that exists is that no one polices the standards. I can cite the example of a local manufacturer of a plumbing product who went to considerable lengths to get an approval on its product, from Standards Australia, only to see his opposition producing and selling his unapproved products in the market place. His opposition even printed the AS approval number on his unapproved product. Months of complaints and letters to Standards Australia were wasted, as apart from a letter or two SA took no action against the competitor. The Plumbing Industry Commission of Victoria was also notified of the competitors activity and the no approved product, but took no action.

I ask the question, why would you bother getting something approved? No one is checking it, no one is policing it and no one is supporting those who invest considerable sums to get "Approval".

I have contacted SA a number of times re faulty or poor quality products that have an AS approval or Watermark stamp, but the only response is; **"it is not our responsibility, try contacting consumer affairs"**. The Plumbing authorities throughout Australia insist on plumbers using products that have Watermark or Standards Australia approval but take absolutely no responsibility for the quality and it is left to the plumber to be determine what is and isn't approved. Being "approved" does not of course absolutely ensure "quality" and I would draw your attention to article 3 below that explains this further.

The Australian Gas Association AGA is worth mentioning as well, each product that is to be used in the supply of gas is supposed to be approved by this authority. The AGA does not recognise any testing done or approval given overseas despite the fact that in many cases the testing procedure required to get for example a "Din Standard" in Europe is far greater than that of the AGA. What this does is ensure the very existence of

22/08/2007

the AGA and maintain its income. This type of behaviour excludes many worthwhile products from being used in Australia because larger overseas companies do not see the market in Australia as big enough to justify the fees and testing costs of the AGA.

I am also editor of the Plumbers Voice News, a publication sent to over 17,000 plumbers throughout Australia. In the last few months I have published three articles on the topics of standards and perhaps they may be relevant.